Tailoring the Acquisition Process
in the U.S. Department of Defense

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Preface

Regulations and guidance have permitted tailoring of the acquisition process as one of many ways in which the acquisition workforce can more efficiently achieve program objectives. Tailoring is frequently mentioned in regulations and guidance. In particular, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Frank Kendall's Better Buying Power (BBP) 2.0 implementation directive advises that "the first responsibility of the acquisition workforce is to think . . . and not to automatically default to a perceived 'school solution'" (Kendall, 2013, p. 1). BBP 3.0, the latest version of the BBP best practices, continues to address the theme of critical thinking in the U.S. Department of Defense's professional workforce (Kendall, 2015, p. 2). Policy allows (even encourages) program managers to customize regulatory-based reviews, processes, and information requirements to accommodate the unique characteristics of a program while still meeting the regulations' intent for appropriate decision criteria and oversight processes. The extent to which programs take advantage of opportunities to tailor processes and documentation is not clear, but anecdotal evidence suggests that tailoring is more difficult in practice than guidance suggests. Widespread use of tailoring appears to be constrained by a variety of factors inherent in defense acquisition. This exploratory research reviewed the literature and conducted interviews within the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the RAND Corpora-

tion to begin to answer the following key questions regarding the use of tailoring:

- Is tailoring practical and possible?
- What are the constraints that make tailoring a challenge?
- Are there examples of tailoring that demonstrate its usefulness and feasibility?
- What set of skills or resources needs to be available to program managers for tailoring to be successful?
- What other conditions need to exist for tailoring to be effective?

Our objective was to determine whether this policy area would benefit from additional in-depth research.

This report should interest government acquisition professionals, oversight organizations, and, especially, the analytic community as a starting point for further research and analysis.

This research was conducted within the Acquisition and Technology Policy Center of the RAND National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Unified Combatant Commands, the Navy, the Marine Corps, the defense agencies, and the defense Intelligence Community.

For more information on the Acquisition and Technology Policy Center, see http://www.rand.org/nsrd/ndri/centers/atp.html or contact the director (contact information is provided on the web page).

Contents

Summary

Background

The term *tailoring* was adapted to defense acquisition and has been used since at least the 1980s as a way of helping to deal with the inherent uniqueness of acquisition programs. As a result of this characteristic, acquisition programs do not fit squarely into the acquisition system as nominally defined by statute and regulation. Tailoring can eliminate processes or documentation requirements that might not apply to the unique circumstances of acquisition programs. The Defense Acquisition University (DAU) defines tailoring as follows:

> The manner in which certain core issues (program definition, program structure, program design, program assessments, and periodic reporting) are addressed in a particular program. . . . Tailoring may be applied to various aspects of the acquisition process, including program documentation, acquisition phases, the time and scope of decision reviews, supportability analysis, and decision levels consistent with all applicable statutory requirements. (DAU, 2012, p. B-223)

The motivation for tailoring includes increased process efficiency, reduced costs, and managing the program to deliver the capability in a timely manner.

Tailoring has been permitted in acquisition regulations and guidance as one of many ways in which the acquisition workforce can more efficiently achieve program objectives, adapting acquisition management and procedures to the specific characteristics of a particular

program. The acquisition process as codified in regulation and statute attempts to cover every eventuality and is therefore poorly adapted to any particular program. The difference between what makes sense for a particular program and what would be required by default per statute and regulation is—by definition—what should be tailored. Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (USD[AT&L]) Frank Kendall's Better Buying Power 2.0 implementation directive advises that "the first responsibility of the acquisition workforce is to think . . . and not to automatically default to a perceived 'school solution'" (Kendall, 2013, p. 1). This emphasis on the acquisition workforce in regard to tailoring illustrates that one of the key ingredients leading to successful tailoring is that those involved should be educated and trained and have the practical or mentored experience to understand how to tailor the acquisition process to deliver the needed capability to the warfighter.

Tailoring recognizes that acquisition programs are not all the same, and policy permits and encourages program managers (PMs) to customize regulatory-based reviews, processes, and information requirements to accommodate the unique characteristics of a program while still meeting the regulations' intent for appropriate decision criteria and oversight processes. The extent to which programs take advantage of opportunities to tailor processes and documentation is not clear, but anecdotal evidence suggests that tailoring is more difficult in practice than guidance suggests. It is not that more tailoring is necessarily good, but rather that appropriate tailoring is required of virtually every major defense acquisition program.

Results

This exploratory research on tailoring in defense acquisition used a targeted approach to begin to understand some key questions regarding tailoring. The goal of this research was to provide a preliminary understanding of how tailoring is used in U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) acquisition along with a preliminary understanding of potential barriers and paths to improving tailoring. We also wanted to assess

whether additional research would help identify ways that could make tailoring more widespread. We found that tailoring is both practical and possible but that institutional obstacles make it more difficult than it needs to be. Additional research could focus on mitigating those obstacles to increase the effectiveness of tailoring. We also found that the majority of the instances of tailoring involved streamlining documentation requirements. Expanding the range of things that can be tailored in DoD acquisition to include such things as decisionmaking and technical processes would also improve the effectiveness of tailoring.

Current acquisition policy guidance is ambiguous regarding what elements of a program should be considered in determining tailoring needs and how to accomplish that tailoring (e.g., the process for obtaining approvals). There is no policy statement or guidance on how to tailor or what benefits it will yield. However, current policy and practice do emphasize the importance of tailoring in balancing the needs of appropriate program management and oversight with the needs and requirements of the program.

Tailoring is highly encouraged in regulation and guidance but, according to interviewees, is not always supported throughout the approval hierarchy. Consequently, if a PM has to devote a lot of time to defending the tailoring decisions made to his or her program, then the potential efficiency gains from tailoring might be lost because of the time spent defending the tailoring; PMs could simply opt to comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements according to a strict interpretation. In cases in which the PM, service staff, and Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) staff collaborate on generating and approving tailoring ideas, it appears that tailoring is more practical and possible.

In the literature review that was conducted for this report, the study team found that an urgent warfighter requirement provided a strong motivation for tailoring in order to meet critical schedule needs. In addition, the presence of an acquisition workforce willing and able to compromise at all levels was needed to accomplish the tailoring. The literature review also shows that certain program types have used tailoring over time: information technology systems, rapid-acquisition

programs, and programs with schedule as the primary driver. PMs of programs with these characteristics might find it easier to tailor. Within the literature, there were several examples of acquisition programs in which tailoring was successful, including Command Post of the Future, VXX (the Navy's Presidential Helicopter Replacement Program), and Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected armored vehicles; however, tailoring tends to be a secondary issue, rather than a focus, in most of the literature. Research on tailoring would benefit from examining how tailoring has been applied to a larger sample of programs for which schedule is a driver to better explain how and whether tailoring has contributed to successful program outcomes.

Interviewees within OSD indicated that tailoring is constrained by various bureaucratic characteristics, such as high turnover among senior leaders, weak support for tailoring, and weak incentives and structures. Also, education and training are important so the workforce knows how to tailor acquisition procedures. Tailoring requires a workforce that thinks critically about acquisition issues and understands the acquisition process in great detail; however, even though a well-trained workforce is a foundational requirement, other reasons, including lack of support from various leadership in the acquisition chain of command, could inhibit tailoring. Additional interviews of service-level staff need to be conducted in order to balance the observations and recommendations that were provided by the OSD staff.

We examined available USD(AT&L)–authored Acquisition Decision Memoranda (ADMs) from the late 1980s through 2012 for examples of what appeared to be tailoring or streamlining. In a larger effort, it would be useful to examine ADMs for which the service acquisition executive is the decisionmaker to provide a more balanced analysis. We then narrowed the larger sample to 58 ADMs that suggested specific evidence of tailoring or streamlining. We also examined 60 Acquisition Strategies (ASs) to gain a better understanding of how tailoring is reflected in key acquisition documentation, identify examples of tailoring, and develop ideas of how the use of tailoring could be improved. We found that the section of the ASs that is devoted solely to tailoring typically contains boilerplate language rather than a discussion of how specific acquisition procedures were tailored and the rationale for those

tailoring decisions. Evidence of tailoring could be found elsewhere in the ASs as reflected in nuanced discussions of specific elements of the acquisition process or through modification of DoD Instruction (DoDI) 5000.02 information requirements, but, in general, specific examples of tailoring are not called out explicitly in ASs. We did find evidence of tailoring in ADMs and ASs but found that the evidence consisted of more-obvious examples of tailoring (e.g., waivers and eliminating events or documentation).

A relatively small number of ASs integrate discussions of tailoring into the specific functional element being tailored. This practice suggests an important difference in how stakeholders perceive tailoring. The majority appear to consider tailoring as a separate activity in program planning, rather than as an integrated aspect of planning. In the few examples we found in which tailoring was integrated into program planning, the discussion of what was being tailored and why tended to be more nuanced and reflected a deeper consideration of program and environmental characteristics affecting program management, execution, and oversight. We found few examples in which the AS explicitly linked one or more program characteristics to a specific technical or procedural element being tailored. In addition, programs that included tailoring language tended to identify only a few items to be tailored.

That said, it was apparent that even programs in which the AS did not specifically address tailoring (i.e., did not use the word *tailoring* or *streamlining* anywhere in the document) did, in fact, reflect some degree of tailoring. Specific acquisition technical or procedural elements were usually discussed with respect to the characteristics or environment of the specific program. These were generally highly nuanced discussions that indicated that program officials had, in fact, thought through how to apply specific technical or procedural elements within the context of their programs. Thus, even when an AS did not incorporate an explicit tailoring subsection of language, some degree of tailoring was reflected in the AS. Conversely, the fact that an AS included specific language or a subsection on tailoring does not mean that tailoring was done more thoroughly or better in the program to which it applied than in other programs. In this analysis, it was not possible to assess the quality and effectiveness of tailoring, only whether some degree of tailoring was

reflected in two program documents (ADM or AS), nor did this analysis assess whether tailoring was appropriate in specific instances.

The kind of tailoring mentioned in the AS also tended to reflect the policy or philosophical emphasis in the extant policy regime. For instance, many of the programs that started in the mid- to late 1990s or early 2000s tended to mention use of performance-based standards rather than military specifications, an acquisition reform theme at the time. The AS tended to use language found in DoDI 5000.02 or *Defense Acquisition Guidebook* (Defense Acquisition University, undated) in effect at the time the AS was written.

We were able to identify a preliminary set of conditions necessary for tailoring to be successful or effective. One of the more critical is sustained leadership support throughout the acquisition chain of command, including bridging changes in leadership. Tailoring also requires significant effort and initiative by officials in the program office, functional staff, and Milestone Decision Authority to accomplish. Tailoring might be easier in an environment in which both staff and leadership expect tailoring for each program, and the only issue is what kind of tailoring is appropriate for a given program. In some respects, this would be a major cultural change from the current environment in which 100-percent compliance with all elements of policy is the perceived expectation. Also, there is no reason that PMs should be the only officials responsible for developing ideas on how to improve the match between the technical, management, and oversight process and the needs of a program. Service and OSD functional and oversight staff can assist the PMs, who are responsible for executing their programs, with suggestions on how to tailor given the circumstances. The Integrated Product Team (IPT) structure (Working-Level IPT, Integrating IPT, and Overarching IPT [OIPT]) seems like an appropriate forum in which to discuss tailoring ideas and make recommendations to program, service, and OSD leadership. In the interviews, we heard multiple times that OIPT leads are considering tailoring. Conditions need to exist such that all stakeholders can document what is being tailored and the rationale for that tailoring as a baseline (beyond boilerplate language). This documentation would allow revisiting the appropriateness of the tailoring decisions if changes to fundamental

planning assumptions or the external environment warrant it. Also, the critical point for tailoring to be planned in a program's life cycle is before Milestone (MS) B, in which planning is conducted; however, there might not be sufficient funding available to set up a program office and do the proper planning before MS B. Finally, for tailoring plans to be evaluated before the major decisions, those plans should be provided six to 12 months before a major decision.

Acknowledgments

Abbreviations

ADM	Acquisition Decision Memorandum
AS	Acquisition Strategy
BBP	Better Buying Power
CAPE	Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation
CCDR	contractor cost data reporting
CPOF	Command Post of the Future
DAB	Defense Acquisition Board
DAU	Defense Acquisition University
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
DoDD	Department of Defense directive
DoDI	Department of Defense instruction
EMD	engineering and manufacturing development
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulation
GAO	U.S. Government Accountability Office
IPT	Integrated Product Team
IT	information technology
MDA	Milestone Decision Authority

MRAP	Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected
MS A (B, C)	Milestone A, B, or C
OIPT	Overarching Integrated Product Team
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
PM	program manager
SAE	service acquisition executive
SASSA	Self-Awareness Space Situational Awareness
SE	systems engineering
SEP	Systems Engineering Plan
T&E	test and evaluation
USD(AT&L)	Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics
VXX	Presidential Helicopter Replacement Program

Introduction

Background and Motivation

Acquisition regulations and guidance both permit and encourage tailoring as one of many ways in which the acquisition workforce can more efficiently achieve program objectives by thinking through how statutory and regulatory requirements apply, given the characteristics of a specific program. Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (USD[AT&L]) Frank Kendall's Better Buying Power 2.0 implementation directive alludes to tailoring multiple times. Specifically, he advises that "the first responsibility of the acquisition workforce is to think . . . and not to automatically default to a perceived 'school solution'" (Kendall, 2013, p. 1). In addition, he mentions that the workforce needs to "streamline decisions . . . streamline our processes and oversight to provide value added. . . . Our managers cannot be effective if process consumes all of their most precious resource—time" (Kendall, 2013, p. 2).

Tailoring has been mentioned and recommended in versions of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) 5000 series since at least the 1980s. The 2008 version of *Defense Acquisition Guidebook* (Defense Acquisition University [DAU], undated) mentions tailoring 131 times in its 1,200 pages. The 2007 and 2008 versions of DoD Directive (DoDD) 5000.01 (USD[AT&L], 2003a [2007]) and DoD Instruction (DoDI) 5000.02 (USD[AT&L], 2008) include discussions of tailoring:

> There is no one best way to structure an acquisition program to accomplish the objective of the Defense Acquisition System.

> MDAs [Milestone Decision Authorities] and PMs [program managers] shall tailor program strategies and oversight, including documentation of program information, acquisition phases, the timing and scope of decision reviews, and decision levels, to fit the particular conditions of that program, consistent with applicable laws and regulations and the time-sensitivity of the capability need. (USD[AT&L], 2003a [2007])

The 2013 interim DoDI 5000.02 (November 2013) states,

> This instruction . . . authorizes Milestone Decision Authorities (MDAs) to tailor the regulatory requirements and acquisition procedures in this instruction to more efficiently achieve program objectives, consistent with statutory requirements and Reference (a) . . . MDAs should tailor regulatory procedures in the document consistent with sound business practice and the risks associated with the product being acquired. (USD[AT&L], 2013, pp. 1–2)

Tailoring recognizes that acquisition programs are not all the same, and policy allows (even encourages) PMs to customize regulatory-based reviews, processes, and information requirements to accommodate the unique characteristics of a program while still meeting the regulations' intent for appropriate decision criteria and effective oversight. The extent to which programs tailor processes and documentation is not clear, but anecdotal evidence suggests that tailoring is more difficult in practice than guidance suggests. A variety of factors inherent in defense acquisition appear to constrain widespread use of tailoring.

Tailoring, as commonly used, means adapting acquisition management and procedures to the specific characteristics of a particular program, including management structure, oversight and reporting, and Acquisition Strategy (AS). The unique characteristics of programs and their technical and political environments necessitate a high degree of tailoring. Tailoring also requires certain characteristics in the workforce (e.g., skills, experience, critical thinking, willingness to compromise, take risks).

The motivation for tailoring acquisition programs is based on the observed high variation in programmatic, technical, and environmental characteristics among programs. Such variation implies that each program has unique requirements in terms of risk management, program management, reporting processes, government–industry relationships, and economic and financial concerns. The technical aspects of program execution—systems engineering (SE) and testing—might also be relatively distinctive to a specific program. That variation, reflecting the relative uniqueness of each program, provides opportunities to tailor processes and resources to produce savings and increase efficiency. In theory, those unique programmatic, technical, political, and economic characteristics should determine the management approach, management structure, staffing needs, contracting strategies, SE and test plans, and reporting and oversight requirements. This approach is consistent with the tailoring provisions in DoD's acquisition-management directives and instructions.

Prior policy statements on tailoring were somewhat ambiguous or even conflicting. For instance, the 2008 DoDI 5000.02 included these two statements:

> Consistent with statutory requirements and Reference (b), authorizes Milestone Decision Authorities (MDAs) to tailor the regulatory information requirements and acquisition process procedures in this Instruction to achieve cost, schedule, and performance goals. (¶ 1c)

> b. Consistent with this Instruction and Reference (b), the Program Manager (PM) and the MDA shall exercise discretion and prudent business judgment to structure a tailored, responsive, and innovative program. (Enclosure 2, ¶ 1b)

The first statement indicates that acquisition procedures are tailored to the characteristics of a program. The second statement seems to suggest that it is the program that is tailored. The 2013 interim version of DoDI 5000.02 resolves this problem and makes it clear that it is acquisition procedures that should be tailored to meet program needs,

not the program structured to fit acquisition processes. The equivalent statements are as follows:

> Authorizes Milestone Decision Authorities (MDAs) to tailor the regulatory requirements and acquisition procedures in this instruction to more efficiently achieve program objectives, consistent with statutory requirements and Reference (a). (¶ 1b)

> MDAs should tailor regulatory procedures in the document consistent with sound business practice and the risks associated with the product being acquired. (¶ 4b)

In both statements, authority and responsibility to tailor regulatory requirements are given to the MDA, which means the USD(AT&L) or the service acquisition executives (SAEs) for Acquisition Category I or IA programs.[1] This suggests that it is not just the PM who has the responsibility to tailor procedures; functional staff supporting the

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[1]   According to DAU,

> ACAT I programs are Major Defense Acquisition Programs (MDAPs). [An] MDAP is a program that is not a highly sensitive classified program and that is designated by the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics (USD[AT&L]) as [an] MDAP; or that is estimated to require eventual expenditure for research, development, test, and evaluation (RDT&E), including all planned increments, of more than $480 million (Fiscal Year [FY] 2014 constant dollars) or procurement, including all planned increments, of more than $2.79 billion (FY 2014 constant dollars). . . .

> ACAT IA programs are Major Automated Information Systems (MAIS). A MAIS is a DoD acquisition program for an automated information system (AIS) that is either designated by the MDA as a MAIS, or estimated to exceed: $40 million (FY 2014 constant dollars), for all increments, regardless of appropriation or fund source, directly related to the AIS definition, design, development, and deployment, and incurred in any single FY; or $165 million (FY 2014 constant dollars), for all expenditures, for all increments, regardless of appropriation or fund source, directly related to AIS definition, design, development, and deployment, and incurred from the beginning of the Materiel Solution Analysis (MSA) Phase through deployment at all sites; or $520 million (FY 2014 constant dollars) for all expenditures, for all increments, regardless of appropriation or fund source, directly related to the AIS definition, design, development, deployment, operations and maintenance (O&M), and incurred from the beginning of the MSA phase through sustainment for the estimated useful life of the system. (DAU, 2014b)

MDA and, consequently, staffs at all levels in DoD and Congress also have responsibility to develop ideas for tailoring.

Current acquisition policy guidance is somewhat ambiguous regarding what aspects of the process can be tailored, what elements of a program should be considered in determining tailoring needs, and what tailoring should produce. No policy statement or guidance explains how to tailor or exactly what benefits are expected. However, current policy and practice do emphasize the importance of tailoring in balancing the needs of appropriate program management and oversight with the needs and requirements of the program. Senior leadership emphasizes the need for critical thinking in the workforce (Kendall, 2013, p. 1). This need is not associated with only PMs but rather applies to the workforce as a whole.

One common criticism of acquisition is that most programs are executed according to the strict literal interpretation of the procedures and information requirements in policy and guidance. This is sometimes referred to as a "check-the-box" approach. Not all programs fit comfortably within this "normal" acquisition process. Information technology (IT) acquisition programs are unique in that software updates must be delivered frequently:

> [IT] Programs can adopt Agile practices within current policy by tailoring program processes and structure to deliver releases every 6–12 months. The DoD can apply Agile practices to the full range of IT product and Service acquisitions. (Modigliani and Chang, 2014, p. ii)

Also, major shipbuilding programs have characteristics that make application of the generic acquisition problematic (Drezner et al., 2011).[2] Tailoring—using the flexibility inherent in acquisition regulations—requires significant effort and initiative by officials in the program office, functional staff, and MDA to accomplish.

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[2]   Differences include expectation that first unit is deployed, construction rather than production, greater concurrency of design and build, complexity, high unit cost, and low production rate.

Although they consistently allow for tailoring of acquisition pro-cedures to meet the specific circumstances and characteristics of a pro-gram, the language and relative emphasis in policy and guidance have varied somewhat over time. However, the intent of policy and guid-ance has been consistent in supporting the need for tailoring, placing the responsibility for tailoring largely on the PM. Although the MDA is also responsible for tailoring, as a practical matter, the PM is more familiar with the unique aspects of the program and would propose the tailoring plan for the MDA to endorse.

Tailoring acquisition procedures can be thought of as an integral aspect of program planning. A PM is expected to think through the characteristics of a program and construct an AS that includes both the technical (or engineering) aspects of system development and the pro-cedural elements associated with program management and oversight.

Technical planning includes developing the engineering and test-ing strategies that enable trade studies, design decisions, technology maturation and demonstration, detailed design, SE, and developmen-tal and operational testing. The characteristics of the system or pro-gram that are considered here include the following:

- maturity of the technologies
- maturity of the design
- industry structure and capability
- technological and system integration risk
- degree to which IT provides functionality (software intensive-ness).

Technical planning is documented, in part, in several required pro-gram documents that serve the dual purpose of laying out a strategy for execution and providing information for management, oversight, and milestone decisions. Examples include the systems engineering plan (SEP) and the test and evaluation master plan. Because technical activities are so closely tied to system characteristics, this kind of tai-loring is hard to separate from what we expect technical planning and management to do.

Procedural tailoring includes activities associated with program management and oversight. This includes both the process required to execute the program and statutory and regulatory requirements for oversight and decisionmaking. Aspects of the program considered here include the same characteristics considered in technical planning, but also these:

- unique circumstances associated with the program
- urgency of the capability need
- current emphasis in acquisition reform
- business environment and industrial base.

Acquisition policy and guidance have identified the elements of the process that can be tailored. These include those listed below:

- contracting strategy (type and incentive structure)
- contractor performance and execution reporting (contract performance report and contractor cost data reporting [CCDR])
- information requirements
- program documentation
- number of milestone reviews and decisions
- timing, content, and scope of official oversight reviews
- management and oversight structure and decision layers
- acquisition phases and program entry point
- competition strategy (for what and in which phase)
- use of military specifications
- use of commercial off-the-shelf or government off-the-shelf products
- decision or approval levels for milestones, reviews, and documentation
- degree of concurrency
- scope and timing of test activities
- combining developmental and operational testing
- early funding to design in reliability
- use of prototyping

- use of different acquisition approaches (e.g., incremental, block, or single-step).

Although this list of process elements that can be modified or dropped is fairly long, policy and guidance do not directly associate specific program characteristics with specific procedural changes. Nor is this list complete; policy enables the PM and MDA to tailor any regulatory requirement considered appropriate. The decision criteria for what is appropriate are usually phrased in policy as "consistent with common urgency of need, sound business practice, and degree of technical risk."

This exploratory analysis begins to answer the following key questions regarding the use of tailoring:

- How is tailoring defined in acquisition policy and practice?
- How does the acquisition workforce perceive tailoring?
- What constraints make tailoring a challenge?
- Are there examples of tailoring that demonstrate its usefulness and feasibility?
- What set of skills or resources need to be available to PMs for tailoring to be successful?
- What other conditions need to exist for tailoring to be effective?

Ultimately, we wanted to determine the extent to which tailoring is both practical and possible and whether this policy area would benefit from additional in-depth research.

Analytical Framework and Methodology

We used a three-part methodology for this research effort. First, we conducted a limited number of interviews within the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) to understand generally how acquisition personnel view and practice tailoring. Because of the exploratory nature of this research, we did not have the resource scope to interview those involved in tailoring in the services or stakeholders with responsibility for execution. Such interviews are required to get a more complete

understanding of tailoring challenges and would be a critical piece of the analysis for a larger effort. We supplemented the interviews with a literature review on tailoring. A large portion of this review focused on what is available in the main acquisition regulations (the DoD 5000 series) spanning 1975 to 2015.

Finally, we examined a large number of program Acquisition Strategies and Acquisition Decision Memoranda (ADMs) for analysis of evidence of tailoring. The criteria we used to identify examples of tailoring in ADMs and ASs include the following:

- changes from the strict literal interpretation of policy and guidance
- use of the terms *tailoring* or *streamlining*
- mention of waivers of specific procedural or information-related steps.

We chose these broad criteria because we wanted to capture as many examples of different kinds of tailoring as possible. Acquisition policy indicates that changes from the nominal acquisition process requirements are approved by the MDA, documented in a program's AS, and approved in the ADM resulting from a milestone review. Specific waivers can also be issued through independent memorandum and incorporated into the next AS revision.

Organization of This Report

Chapter Two provides information from the literature on tailoring. Chapter Three provides the results of a limited set of interviews conducted within OSD and RAND. Chapter Four presents the results of our examination of ADMs and ASs from the mid-1980s onward. Finally, we present our conclusions in Chapter Five from this preliminary analysis on tailoring, along with some ideas for follow-on work.

Literature Review

This chapter provides some indication of what exists in regulation, guidance, and analysis on tailoring as it pertains to acquisition in DoD. Specifically, we explored open-source documentation from DAU, DoD guidance and regulations, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), the Congressional Budget Office, the Naval Postgraduate School, the Congressional Research Service, RAND, and other information that was relevant in the Defense Technical Information Center. This review did not encompass all pertinent literature on this topic but was focused specifically to capture the most likely places where information on tailoring in DoD acquisition could be found. A more in-depth look at tailoring would also include anything in open source in the private sector or academia, along with the defense trade literature.

Description of Tailoring

Over time, the term *tailor* has typically referred to "a person who makes men's clothes (such as suits and jackets) that are measured to fit a particular person" or "to make (clothing that is measured to fit a particular person)" or "to make or change (something) so that it meets a special need or purpose" ("Tailor," undated). *Tailoring* was adapted to defense acquisition and has been used since at least the 1980s as a way of helping to deal with the fact that acquisition programs have some features that are unique and, therefore, do not fit squarely into the existing acquisition processes and oversight. Tailoring can eliminate or modify processes or documentation requirements that might not apply

to the unique circumstances of acquisition programs. Some of the key motivations for tailoring are increasing efficiency, reducing costs, and managing the acquisition program in a way to deliver the capability in a timely manner.

DAU's *Glossary of Defense Acquisition Acronyms and Terms* defines tailoring as follows:

> The manner in which certain core issues (program definition, program structure, program design, program assessments, and periodic reporting) are addressed in a particular program. The Milestone Decision Authority (MDA) seeks to minimize the time it takes to satisfy an identified need consistent with common sense, sound business management practice, applicable laws and regulations, and the time-sensitive nature of the requirement itself. Tailoring may be applied to various aspects of the acquisition process, including program documentation, acquisition phases, the time and scope of decision reviews, supportability analysis, and decision levels consistent with all applicable statutory requirements. (DAU, 2012)

DAU also connects tailoring to the definition of *streamlining*, which is, "1. Allows flexibility for application of contractor's expertise, judgment, and creativity in meeting requirements. Ensures [that] only cost-effective requirements are included in solicitation and contracts. 2. Broadly used to denote efforts to shorten [the] acquisition process" (DAU, 2012).

We used the DAU definition to narrow how we thought about tailoring for this analysis, along with how it is being applied in official documentation later in this report.

Guidance and Regulation

The concept of tailoring is included in DoDD 5000.1, DoDI 5000.2, DoDD 5000.01, DoDI 5000.02 (1975 to 2013), the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), and the Defense Federal Acquisition Reg-

ulation Supplement.[1] It also appears in service-level and additional OSD-level guidance. The 1975 version of DoDI 5000.2 recognized the uniqueness and importance of acquisition programs and applying the acquisition processes based on this uniqueness:

> The success of the [Decision Coordinating Paper]/[Defense Systems Acquisition Review Council] process is vitally dependent upon a clear recognition of the individuality of each major defense system program and the sensible application of the policies of DoD Directive 5000.1. . . . Specific program circumstances may dictate the need for DoD Components to deviate from the procedures outlined herein. When appropriate, the Head of the cognizant DoD Component may request a waiver to particular requirements of this document from the appropriate [Defense Systems Acquisition Review Council] Chairman, indicating the circumstances that justify such waiver. (Director of Defense Research and Engineering, 1975, pp. 2, 7)

In the new version of DoDI 5000.02 (January 2015), the second major "purpose" of the instruction is to authorize MDAs "to tailor the regulatory requirements and acquisition procedures in this instruction to more efficiently achieve program objectives, consistent with statutory requirements and Reference (a)." The instruction subsequently advises the use of tailoring consistently throughout the document:

> The structure of a DoD acquisition program and the procedures used should be tailored as much as possible to the characteristics of the product being acquired, and to the totality of circumstances associated with the program including operational urgency and risk factors. . . . MDAs will tailor program strategies and oversight, including program information, acquisition phase content, the timing and scope of decision reviews and decision levels, based on the specifics of the product being acquired, including complexity, risk factors, and required timelines to satisfy validated capability requirements. . . . When there is a strong threat-based

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[1] The FAR is the primary regulation for use by all federal executive agencies in their acquisition of supplies and services with appropriated funds.

> or operationally driven need to field a capability solution in the shortest time, MDAs are authorized to implement streamlined procedures designed to accelerate acquisition system responsiveness. Statutory requirements will be complied with, unless waived in accordance with relevant provisions. . . . The documents prepared in support of the decision process (e.g., Acquisition Strategy, Systems Engineering Plan [SEP], Test and Evaluation Master Plan [TEMP], Life-Cycle Sustainment Plan [LCSP], etc.) should generally not be prepared solely for staff review and approval, but be intended primarily for use within the program as planning and management tools that are highly specific to the program and tailored to meet program needs. (DoDI 5000.02, 2015)

The 2015 DoDI 5000.02 also includes a major change to the 2008 version: "Example Program Models—tailored for the product being acquired and designed to serve as benchmarks for structuring programs" (Hawthorne, 2013, p. 8). This provides some baseline tailoring of the acquisition process based on the type of product being acquired:

> Product-Tailored Acquisition Models:
>
> - Model 1: Hardware Intensive Program
> - Model 2: Defense Unique Software Intensive Program
> - Model 3: Incrementally Fielded Software Intensive Program
> - Hybrid Program A (Hardware Dominant)
> - Hybrid Program B (Software Dominant)
> - Model 4: Accelerated Acquisition Program (Hawthorne, 2013, p. 10)

Within the FAR and Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement that govern the procurement of "supplies and services with appropriated funds," *tailoring* is used in various circumstances to assist the acquisition workforce. For example, the FAR states the following in regard to tailoring:

> Contents of written acquisition plans . . . (8) Acquisition streamlining. If specifically designated by the requiring agency as a program subject to acquisition streamlining, discuss plans and

procedures to—(i) Encourage industry participation by using draft solicitations, presolicitation conferences, and other means of stimulating industry involvement during design and development in recommending the most appropriate application and tailoring of contract requirements; (ii) Select and tailor only the necessary and cost effective requirement. (p. 7.1-3)

A section of the FAR (12.302) is also devoted to the "[t]ailoring of provisions and clauses for the acquisition of commercial items":

The provisions and clauses established in this subpart are intended to address, to the maximum extent practicable, commercial market practices for a wide range of potential Government acquisitions of commercial items. However, because of the broad range of commercial items acquired by the Government, variations in commercial practices, and the relative volume of the Government's acquisitions in the specific market, contracting officers may, within the limitations of this subpart, and after conducting appropriate market research, tailor the provision at 52.212-1, Instructions to Offerors—Commercial Items, and the clause at 52.212-4, Contract Terms and Conditions—Commercial Items, to adapt to the market conditions for each acquisition. (FAR, 2006, p. 12.3-2)

Within service-level guidance, one example can be found in Navy guidance. The Navy's *Acquisition and Capabilities Guidebook* (Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, 2012) consistently advises the use of tailoring throughout the guidebook for acquisition personnel. It mentions tailoring that can be done at various portions of the acquisition process (e.g., requirements and testing) and focuses particularly on tailoring documentation needs to a particular program. It also mentions tailoring decision points:

As an example of decision point tailoring, it is conceivable that a Commercial-Off-The-Shelf (COTS) acquisition strategy could have program initiation at a combined Milestone C and Full-Rate Production Decision Review (FRP DR) and go directly into pro-

duction or deployment. (Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition, 2012, p. 1-24)

The OSD Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE) office issued guidance in 2011 in its cost and software data reporting manual.[2] CAPE advises on the tailoring of various cost-reporting documents:

> Extensions of the [contract work breakdown structure] can be tailored to the specific program but will be consistent with Reference (f). More detailed reporting of the [contract work breakdown structure] shall be required only for those lower-level elements that address high-risk, high-value, or high-technical-interest areas of a program. . . . Contractors shall be required to submit the standard CCDR forms according to the guidelines in this Manual and the appropriate [data item description]. DoD PMs may request data other than that provided for on the standard CCDR forms, requiring tailoring of the forms. These tailored forms constitute separate reports that require separate contract actions (e.g., [contract data requirements list]). . . . All the [software resources data reporting] formats should be tailored based upon the way that the software developer performs its activities and the related metrics that it uses. (CAPE, 2011, enclosure 2, pp. 10, 18)

Tailoring Acquisition Processes and Documentation

In the literature on tailoring, outside of guidance, some mention is made of tailoring various elements of the acquisition process (e.g., testing and SE) along with the accompanying documentation. Grauel, Malone, and Wygal (2012) assessed "successful Army acquisition pro-

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[2] This manual serves as the primary requirement document for the development, implementation, and operation of the CCDR and software resources data reporting systems, collectively referred to as the cost and software data reporting system.

grams in order to identify characteristics that led to their success." According to Grauel, Malone, and Wygal (2012, p. 23),

> Taking the right approach to a program involves creating an appropriate acquisition strategy. The strategy must then be translated into a contract that makes sense to industry, incentivizes it to perform, and provides the government with mission-enhancing products at a good value. All the programs in this study tailored their process approaches to their specific acquisition needs.

In this section, we discuss a couple of studies that looked at tailoring of the testing and SE processes.

Testing

Given various statutory and regulatory requirements, testing of systems is required in the acquisition process. Hanf (2009) explains how tailoring can be applied to the testing environment:

> In the early Acquisition Process [test and evaluation] T&E was expected within three key phases in a system's life cycle—during development under primary responsibility of the contractor that was building the system; at the end of that period when there was a government developmental testing period; and then before the system was officially handed over to the users when there was an operational test. . . . This process worked well for large industrial era systems especially when the military industrial complex was at its peak, but as the systems became more and more complex and correspondingly more expensive and the Defense budget was not getting larger, it became important to find ways to reduce costs. For Test & Evaluation, this manifested itself as the first major tailoring of the T&E process. (pp. 1–2)

Hanf provides a specific example of how testing processes were tailored based on the B-1 and B-2 bomber experiences:

> A major tailoring to T&E processes came in the aircraft acquisition environment. . . . Since items like the B-1 and B-2 Bombers were either very expensive to build or had severe cost constraints,

the program could not afford to have each test stakeholder own their own test aircraft. Since only a single test asset would be available during development, the test stakeholders had to share flights to collect data. This resulted in the stand up of Combined Test Forces (CTFs) in a single location with representatives from each stakeholder co-existing in shared facilities and test conduct and analysis infrastructure. The impact was that the process had to be tailored. . . . [A]ll stakeholders distributed their test collections and observations across the development phase based on appropriate maturity levels of the system when test collection opportunities were planned. Planning was done cooperatively, and objectives were negotiated so that all participating stakeholders could maximize their collections from each event. Other than the Assessment for Testability that occurred early in the requirements assessment phase, operational testers would actively monitor activities, and continuously interject operational viewpoints to influence the development. Later on, government developmental and operational testers would have combined test events in which flights were planned to include Operational Test (OT) and Government Developmental Test (DT) objectives. Operational testers would again participate to gain more in depth knowledge of the systems and in some instances collect data for independent analysis. . . . All of this streamlining occurred to accommodate resource shortcomings, yet it still held to best practice and met the law. (Hanf, 2009, pp. 3–4)

Systems Engineering

SE assists in managing complex acquisition programs. Johnson (2010) provided an assessment of how the Air Force's congressionally initiated Self-Awareness Space Situational Awareness (SASSA) technology demonstration program tailored SE processes to implement rapid space acquisition (p. v). In the literature, this was one of the few sources that concentrated on understanding tailoring and its effects on acquisition

programs. Most other sources address tailoring as secondary. Johnson concluded the following:

> The completion of this study has yielded an assessment of the effectiveness of tailored SE processes on the SASSA program in achieving the cost, schedule, and technical goals in a rapid space acquisition. This study assessed six standard SE processes as tailored by the SASSA program. Of these six, one was judged as a neutral contribution while five were judged as helpful in achieving the program goals. No tailored processes were judged as negative contributions to meeting the rapid space acquisitions goals. (Johnson, 2010, p. 4)

Also in regard to SE, in April 2011, a new "template" was released for the SEP, which is an information requirement in DoDI 5000.02. This latest version provides advice on tailoring multiple portions of the document, including the following:

- Tailoring for Technology Development (TD) and Engineering and Manufacturing Development (EMD) phases: SEP should be updated after contract award to reflect winning contractor(s)' technical strategy reflected in the Systems Engineering Management Plan (SEMP).
- Tailoring for the Production and Deployment Phase: Describe how the organizational structure evolves after Milestone C (MS C). If the program doesn't have a Production Integrated Product Team (IPT) during EMD Phase, one should be established in the Production and Deployment (P&D) Phase.
- Tailoring for TD phase: Describe how competitive prototyping, the Technology Readiness Assessment (TRA), the Preliminary Design Review (PDR), and test results will inform the program's Key Performance Parameter/Key System Attributes (KPP/KSAs) for the EMD phase.
- Identify tailored Entrance Criteria.
- Identify tailored Exit Criteria. (Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Systems Engineering, 2011, pp. 6, 18, 22, 24)

Rapid-Acquisition, Information Technology, and Other Program Examples

In the literature, we found a couple of examples of how tailoring has been applied positively to the unique experiences of acquisition programs. Timing, i.e., schedule urgency and constraints, was a critical element and a necessary ingredient in these examples of programs that used tailoring. In one example, the Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicle program, schedule was a major driver. In this case, streamlining or tailoring appeared to be a useful tool. In the open-source literature, we found the following regarding MRAP and tailoring:

> DOD used a tailored acquisition approach to rapidly acquire and field MRAP vehicles. The program established minimal operational requirements, decided to rely on only proven technologies, and relied heavily on commercially available products. The program also undertook a concurrent approach to producing, testing, and fielding the most survivable vehicles as quickly as possible. To expand limited existing production capacity, the department expanded competition by awarding [indefinite-delivery, indefinite-quantity] contracts to nine commercial sources. To evaluate design, performance, producibility, and sustainability, DOD committed to buy at least four vehicles from each vendor. According to program officials, subsequent delivery orders were based on a phased testing approach with progressively more advanced vehicle test results and other assessments. To expedite the fielding of the vehicles, the government retained the responsibility for final integration of mission equipment packages including radios and other equipment into the vehicles after they were purchased. DOD also designated the MRAP program as DOD's highest priority acquisition, which helped contractors and other industry partners to more rapidly respond to the urgent need and meet production requirements. Finally, some of the contractors involved in the acquisition responded to the urgency communicated by the department by investing their own capital early to purchase needed steel and other critical components in advance of orders. The decision on the part of the contractors to purchase

components in advance of orders was not required under their contracts and was done at their own risk. (GAO, 2009, p. 3)

As stated above, the MRAP was a unique program, but given that urgent needs have been at the forefront of defense acquisition in the past decade, there were some calls for further institutionalizing tailoring within the services:

> Over the past two decades, the fulfillment of urgent needs has evolved as a set of complex processes within the Joint Staff, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, each of the military Services, and the combatant commands to rapidly develop, equip, and field solutions and critical capabilities to the warfighter. GAO identified at least 31 entities that manage urgent needs and expedite the development of solutions to address them . . . . Army officials noted that inconsistency exists regarding rapid acquisition guidance between the Joint Staff, Army, and Air Force policies. . . . Because DOD does not have baseline DOD-wide guidance that applies to urgent operational needs processes across the department clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of how urgent needs should be assessed, processed, and managed—including activities such as tracking the status of a validated requirement— the department continues to maintain a fragmented approach to managing its urgent needs processes. As a result, the department risks inefficiently responding to urgent needs and potentially duplicating efforts. (GAO, 2011, pp. 1, 24)

Keller and Wirthlin (2013) captured creative program-management best practices, which essentially focus on the importance of the acquisition workforce in successful tailoring. Their interviews of those in the acquisition workforce found some key behaviors and thoughts regarding tailoring—some of which we also found from interviewing others in the acquisition workforce for this analytic effort:

> The predominant research finding is that senior acquisition professionals believe that relationship-building is of paramount importance. This, along with creative practices regarding how to externally communicate program strategies, greatly increases

the probability of successfully navigating oversight and obtaining waivers or tailoring regulations. . . . Additionally, a significant difference also existed between the [program director] and rapid experience responses for Seeking Waivers/Tailoring Regulations. Rapid acquisition organizations spend a lot of effort on tailoring programs and obtaining waivers. However, program directors often viewed the process of obtaining a waiver as more difficult than actually complying with the guidance, even if it did not make sense for the program. Therefore, program tailoring was a larger focus area for those with rapid acquisition experience. . . . Building relationships and trust was the most commonly vocalized point throughout the interviews when discussing how best to navigate oversight or obtain a waiver or tailoring. Building and maintaining strong, trusting relationships with peers, co-workers, superiors, stakeholders, and various members of oversight is a continual process built over time. Trust is increased when project members follow through on their word. Although intuitive, the importance of doing what you say you will do, when you said you would do it, should not be undervalued. (Keller and Wirthlin, 2013, abstract and pp. 177–179)

Another acquisition program, Command Post of the Future (CPOF), also used tailoring as part of its strategy to transition the system from Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency to the Army and then scale the system to be fielded quickly across the Army:

The Command Post of the Future (CPOF) program was successfully transitioned from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to the U.S. Army. Use of a tailored DoD 5000 acquisition strategy allowed the new CPOF technology to be fielded as a technology insertion into the Army Battle Command System (ABCS). Key to the success of this transition included the use of risk management techniques to drive the program forward, use of early and sustained feedback from the user community, maintaining transition funding stability, and honest and open communication between all stakeholders. The DoD 5000 acquisition strategy was tailored to fix the risks over time, rather than trying to develop the perfect product in one delivery. (Greene et al., 2010, p. 3)

A third example is the Presidential Helicopter Replacement Program (VXX), which replaced the VH-71. This program considered a tailored strategy at the urging of the USD(AT&L) because technology already existed from a canceled acquisition program:

> In June 2009, the Department of Defense (DOD) terminated the Navy's VH-71 presidential helicopter acquisition program because of cost growth, schedule delays, and a projected shortfall in system performance. The Navy subsequently began efforts to define a follow-on program (the VXX program) to develop aircraft to replace the current, aging presidential helicopter fleet . . . . DOD's recent additional [analysis-of-alternatives] guidance to the Navy reflects this approach, directing the program to consider a more streamlined acquisition approach that includes maturing technologies for upgrades to in-Service aircraft and then incorporating those mature technologies into the VXX acquisition strategy, thereby keeping technology risk to a minimum. It notes that the maturity of the technologies that could be integrated should be the basis for investigation of a tailored acquisition approach. As a result, program officials envision a streamlined approach that enables entry into the acquisition process at Milestone B rather than at Milestone A as originally planned. OSD officials expect that this alternate acquisition strategy will be presented to the VXX Milestone Decision Authority no later than the second quarter of fiscal year 2012. (GAO, 2012b, pp. 1, 8)

Tailoring Information Technology

As acquisition has changed to include large IT-acquisition efforts, the acquisition workforce has focused on ways to shorten the timelines for navigating the formal acquisition process:

> In March 2009, the Defense Science Board reported that DOD's acquisition process for IT systems was too long [and] ineffective, and did not accommodate the rapid evolution of IT. . . . As such, the Board recommended that DOD develop new acquisition and requirements development processes for IT systems that would be agile [and] incremental, and allow requirements to be priori-

tized based on need and technical readiness. Subsequently, DOD developed a new framework—the business capability life-cycle acquisition model—that outlines the key steps that programs should take through the life cycle of acquisition of each major business system. This framework is intended to allow for more flexible acquisition processes that may be tailored to specific programs. (GAO, 2013b, p. 8)

Tailoring Ship Programs

In the literature, rapid-acquisition and IT programs appear to be good candidates for tailoring of the acquisition process. In addition to describing these unique circumstances, Drezner et al. (2011) provided reasoning for why Navy programs—ships in particular—are also well suited for tailoring. The study found the following regarding the acquisition process and ships:

> Despite variations in practice, DoDI 5000.02 is ambiguous or lacks specific language regarding how to tailor ship programs. For example, whereas Milestone B may authorize production of the lead ship, there is no corresponding language that defines when low-rate initial production occurs for ships if production begins at Milestone B. There is also no specific language for ships on full-rate production and Milestone C. The differing (and sometimes ambiguous) meaning of milestones for shipbuilding programs leads to confusion among various acquisition stakeholders. Furthermore, the Secretary of the Navy acquisition instruction is not always consistent with the DoD instruction. For example, the Navy instruction notes that Milestone B authorizes the lead ship and initial follow ships. The DoD instruction states that Milestone B typically authorizes the lead ship and that long lead for follow ships may also be approved. (Drezner et al., 2011, p. xiii)

The study team interviewed Navy ship program managers; program executive officers; Navy acquisition staff; and acquisition, tech-

nology, and logistics staff to understand their views on ships and how they fit into the formal acquisition process:

> Some interviewees suggested that process tailoring is sufficient to address the unique requirements of ships, with one even suggesting that all acquisition programs require tailoring. Others said that ambiguities in language made implementation of the 5000 process more difficult for ships. Among specific areas of difficulty that interviewees mentioned regarding ships were interpreting DoD instructions for ships (including initial and full-rate production), the content and timing of documentation requirements, testing and evaluation issues, statutory issues, and other policy and process issues. Most interviewees did not think the 5000 process was irreparable, but many suggested ways to improve it to accommodate shipbuilding programs. Interviewees thought the 5000 process flexible, but many said that they found tailoring difficult. One claimed that tailoring resulted in more reviews and meetings, providing little incentive to seek it. Some said that improved guidance and less formalization of tailoring might make it more useful. Some felt that low-rate initial production and full-rate production distinctions should not apply to ships. OSD interviewees suggested more and earlier component or subsystem-level testing for ships, whereas Navy personnel suggested different language on technological development, recognizing that ships are a system of systems, and simplification of the system engineering process. Both OSD and Navy personnel felt that improving the ability to tailor, rethinking the meaning of currently ambiguous definitions (such as that for low-rate initial production and full-rate production) for ships, and rethinking the best way to test and evaluate ships would be helpful. One interviewee suggested that capturing these definitions in an annex to the 5000 process would be helpful. (Drezner et al., 2011, p. xiv)

The authors concluded that, although some characteristics of ship programs underscore the need for tailoring,

> care must be taken in tailoring programs. For example, because annual production rates for many complex ships are low and steady, the normal distinction between low-rate and full-rate pro-

duction made by Milestone C is not relevant. Simply dropping Milestone C for ships, however, risks losing other attributes for it that are relevant to oversight, such as the completion of development and initial testing. (Drezner et al., 2011, p. xv)

Interview Results

As a starting point to give us a better understanding of tailoring in the current (2014–2015) acquisition environment in DoD, we conducted a limited number of exploratory interviews within OSD. We interviewed eight acquisition personnel within OSD whom we identified as potentially involved in tailoring of acquisition programs given their roles and responsibilities. In addition to their current OSD responsibilities, some of the interviewees held positions in the services prior to their OSD service. We also interviewed one former PM. The acquisition personnel whom we interviewed had a variety of responsibilities within OSD, including conducting analysis, formulating policy, and supporting major defense acquisition programs as they proceed through the acquisition process. Interviewees provided us with their viewpoints on the following aspects of tailoring:

- definition of tailoring
- examples of tailoring or streamlining
- challenges or constraints to tailoring
- recommendations to improve tailoring.

The following sections of this chapter provide more-specific information about how interviewees view tailoring. Given the small sample size, these viewpoints provided a limited look at this topic. In a more comprehensive study on tailoring, a larger number of acquisition professionals within the services (e.g., PMs and service-level oversight) would need to be interviewed to gain better understanding of what is driving decisions to tailor or not to tailor acquisition programs. We

would also need to discuss this issue further with others in OSD who might have a role in tailoring of acquisition programs. We acknowledge that there are differing points of view between different staff echelons and between oversight and execution organizations, and additional interviews would be necessary to draw broader conclusions and recommendations.

What Is Tailoring?

Interviewees defined *tailoring* similarly to one another. Recognizing that all programs are different, tailoring is shaping governance, adapting processes, and planning requirements to meet unique conditions of acquisition programs. Tailoring equates to effective program planning. Tailoring can encompass streamlining bureaucracy, reducing cycle time, or reducing touch points by modifying content, document requirements, and the review process to meet the specific needs of a program.

In addition, the difference between what makes sense for a particular program and what would be required by default per statute and regulation is—by definition—what should be tailored. The program manager (and the oversight staff) is responsible for establishing and implementing an acquisition strategy that is appropriate for that specific program. Tailoring is necessary to eliminate the unnecessary activities that would otherwise be invoked by default; it recognizes that applying all administrative procedures required by regulation and statute to every program would be inefficient and wasteful.

Another way of explaining tailoring is by recognizing that DoDD 5000.01, DoDI 5000.02, and the *Defense Acquisition Guidebook* provide the baseline or 100 percent of the requirements from the first milestone date to disposal of a weapon system. Tailoring recognizes that not all programs need to go through the entire process or meet every possible process requirement described in policy, nor should they. Acquisition managers need to shape where a program must go without encumbering it. Most important, interviewees recognized that tailoring is planning, not just streamlining documents, which should

be evident by the content of a program's AS, which is intended as both a planning and an oversight document. In practice, tailoring should vary by program and be reflected and documented in ASs. Eliminating documents and other policy or process requirements is recognized as part of tailoring, but the rationale for eliminating documents should be part of overall planning.

Tailoring might also occur out of necessity. For instance, a program might not be able to acquire the original planned product because of budgetary issues. As a result of changing external conditions, PMs might need to tailor the plan to reflect the new conditions. One interviewee referred to this specific instance as "budget-driven tailoring."

An important observation from how interviewees discussed and described tailoring is that it includes both appropriate program planning (e.g., contracting, testing, and SE processes) and adjusting the regulatory-based acquisition process to reflect the characteristics of a specific program and the conditions under which it is being acquired.

What Are Current Examples of Tailoring and Streamlining Practices?

Interviewees provided several instances of tailoring. One program discussed in the interviews had its Technology Readiness Assessment requirement waived. The MDA also permitted it to skip Milestone (MS) A because it was technologically mature. As a result of moving directly to MS B, the program was behind on its required MS B documentation. This program was permitted to move some of its documentation requirements until after MS B.

Another example of tailoring was an Air Force program that partnered with a Navy program to share development of technology. One of the outcomes was cost savings for each service. In this example, OSD provided support for this strategy. This support enabled the tailoring plan to move through the approval process in the services.

An interviewee in OSD provided another example of tailoring when discussing increments and modifications to programs. This interviewee observed that tailoring modification programs is less difficult

because many acquisition policies are designed for new-start programs and consequently are not relevant to modification programs. This interviewee mentioned that programs need to lock in tailored procedural requirements six to 12 months before decision points. If decisions are made earlier in the oversight process, then PMs do not have to task support staff to do something that is ultimately not useful for the program. Also mentioned were the difficulties that existing programs experience when new documentation or procedural requirements are added; tailoring can be used to waive new requirements that do not apply to older programs.

One practice noted in the interviews of OSD staff is the OSD Overarching Integrated Product Team (OIPT) leads working with the program office to go through an entire list of acquisition documentation and determine whether each document is needed. If an acquisition document is not needed, then the reason is given, so that the program does not exert time and effort completing an irrelevant requirement. Working with the OIPT leads results in a formal tailoring plan for program acquisition documentation, although we did not independently speak with the service-level staff to see whether this is a useful practice from their perspective.

Another way to tailor a program is to change the MDA from the USD(AT&L) to the SAE when appropriate, which pushes decision-making to the service and lessens OSD's oversight role.

These different kinds of tailoring—dropping documentation requirements or reviews, modifying document or review content, and delegating decision or approval authority to lower levels—are not mutually exclusive. A program's tailoring strategy can combine changes to different aspects of acquisition policy and process.

In addition, interviewees noted that tailoring statutory requirements is more difficult than tailoring regulatory requirements because a statutory requirement requires a waiver with an ADM signed by the USD(AT&L).

Finally, interviewees gave an example in which tailoring did not happen because of the late delivery of the tailoring plan. An ADM was issued at an in-process review by the Defense Acquisition Board (DAB) that requested an acquisition-documentation streamlining plan. The

plan was turned in too close to the DAB meeting, so the tailoring plan was not useful in practice because the plan was too late to actually tailor or change anything.

What Are the Challenges and Constraints to Tailoring?

Tailoring is not a new concept; however, some OSD interviewees noted that they had not seen much evidence of tailoring in program documents, while others had seen such evidence. Interviewees reasoned that, even with policy changes, the number of documents required has not decreased. The addition of documentation requirements makes tailoring even more difficult. Also, some documents are statutory; statutory process or information requirements need to be formally waived, if the law allows for waivers at all. Others noted that the practice of using templates for required acquisition documentation drives bad behavior (e.g., filling documents with boilerplate language rather than thinking through what is appropriate for a program). By its nature, tailoring might require more effort than a check-the-box approach to program planning.

Interviewees observed that tailoring is a challenge in the services. Both OSD and service oversight staffs limit a PM's ability to tailor for at least two reasons: (1) Such staff need to be convinced that the proposed tailoring is appropriate and does not increase program risk, and (2) those staff organizations have interests the proposed tailoring could affect. PMs do not have the time or incentive "to fight the gauntlet" up to OSD through the service approval process, and there is no incentive for oversight staff to approve tailoring that might increase risk by reducing activities in their functional areas intended to mitigate such risk. As a result, PMs might take the path of least resistance, which is to "check all the boxes" or "follow the cookbook" to get to the next milestone.

Interviewees also noted that the bureaucracy in both OSD and the services inhibits tailoring. Some of the bureaucratic attributes that inhibit tailoring include the following:

- frequent turnover of senior leadership
- leadership possibly not supporting tailoring
- lack of strong incentive structure for tailoring
- presence of "acquisition purists" who believe that all documents and steps should be completed in the acquisition process
- tailoring being difficult to teach
- tailoring requiring a workforce that thinks critically about acquisition issues and understands the acquisition process in great detail.

Most interviewees also mentioned that support contractors frequently write acquisition documentation because government personnel in program offices are trying to spend more of their time executing the program and less time fulfilling oversight requirements. This was referred to as a "cottage industry" for preparing acquisition documents. Interviewees believe that this hinders tailoring because it removes the link between document development and program planning.

What Are Recommendations to Improve Tailoring?

Interviewees offered many high-level recommendations for improving tailoring. Their recommendations revolved around some of the conditions needed for tailoring to be successful. The general themes largely revolve around the development of the people in the acquisition workforce who are executing or overseeing tailoring. Essentially, mentors or other formal training is needed to educate them on how to tailor appropriately. Features of appropriate tailoring include the following:

- strong and sustained senior-leadership support
- strong and sustained support throughout services and OSD, including guidance and mentoring
- strong planning skills

- critically thinking workforce
- timing of tailoring in a program's life cycle
- codification and reinforcement of tailoring
- better tailoring of acquisition documentation.

Strong and Sustained Senior-Leadership Support

Most interviewees mentioned that strong leadership at the USD(AT&L) level and the SAE level is important for promoting and implementing tailoring. Although supported by guidance or policies for many years, tailoring requires day-to-day support and implementation. According to interviewees, the MDA should help programs identify the kinds of activities that should and should not be tailored. In addition, multigenerational leadership commitment is critical for sustained implementation of tailoring.

Strong and Sustained Support Throughout Services and the Office of the Secretary of Defense

Along with senior-leader support for tailoring, interviewees stressed the need for emphasis on tailoring to flow through the hierarchy from the PM through the services to the SAE. Within OSD, OIPT leads and other offices involved in the oversight process also need to be supportive. Tailoring is easier to do in an environment that has strong advocates for tailoring. Multiple interviewees stressed the need for having the support and guidance of a manager directly above the PM (e.g., program executive officer) or of the first-level supervisor in order to effectively promote tailoring. The experiences of supervisors in the acquisition process are critical for assisting PMs in designing tailoring plans. Others mentioned the need to receive "top cover" by OSD that showed support for the tailoring. This support would then flow back to the services in order to assist the program offices with promoting and getting approval for tailoring plans. Essentially, according to interviewees, the chain of command needs to encourage, enforce, and drive behavior, and tailoring will happen naturally in an environment that is set up to support it.

Strong Planning Skills

Interviewees also recognized that tailoring is part of careful and effective program planning. The planning includes understanding and identifying the right path through the acquisition process for the product being acquired. Along with creating an effective program plan, tracking the progress of that plan was also stressed. Essentially, PMs need to ask themselves the question, "What don't I need to do?" Also, at MS B, programs should be starting to think ahead to MS C. Interviewees stressed the need to have effective planning taught at DAU.

Critically Thinking Workforce

The USD(AT&L) has stressed the need for an acquisition workforce with critical thinking skills. Interviewees pointed out that tailoring requires that skill set. In this case, the critical thinking involves understanding in great detail the defense acquisition process and the acquisition program. PMs need to think critically about what they want and need to do for the program to be successful and then compare that to rules and regulations to identify what needs to be tailored. The combination of the two will allow PMs and other critical acquisition staff to come up with ways to eliminate aspects of the acquisition process that are not necessary given a program's characteristics. Interviewees also said that practical lessons from other programs would help PMs come up with ways to tailor effectively. Essentially, tailoring requires a strong, thoughtful, educated acquisition workforce.

Timing of Tailoring in a Program's Life Cycle

Interviewees advised that tailoring needs to happen far enough in advance for it to make sense for a program; in other words, timing of tailoring relative to a program's life cycle is important. One interviewee specifically mentioned that tailoring should be done early, at least two years before a DAB meeting or six months before major milestones. Others stressed that the critical point in a program's life cycle is before MS B, when planning is conducted; however, available funding might not be sufficient to set up a program office and do the proper planning before MS B. In addition, an important characteristic of tailoring is

that it should be thought about and applied early in a program to help manage risk.

Codification and Reinforcement of Tailoring

For tailoring to become a consistent practice, interviewees stressed the need for the practice to be reinforced over time. There should be an active commitment to achieving established tailoring goals. Others stressed that there should be a reward or incentive system for tailoring.

Better Tailoring of Acquisition Documentation

One final area on which interviewees focused specifically for improvement was tailoring of documentation. Interviewees generally agreed that, from an oversight point of view, a summary of the most important substance in the document is better than boilerplate. According to one interviewee, one of the goals is to save time during the approval process. Others noted that tailoring might be very useful to older programs that need to adhere to newer documentation requirements or programs that are upgrades to existing programs.

Acquisition Decision Memoranda and Acquisition Strategies

This chapter augments the literature and interviews based on a review of two key acquisition documents: ADMs and ASs.[1] The ADMs are short documents that record major decisions made in an acquisition program and provide direction to the program and other stakeholders. The ADMs that we reviewed are ones in which the MDA is the USD(AT&L), which also implies that they reflect decisions on Acquisition Category ID and IAM programs. These ADMs provide an OSD perspective, so examining SAE ADMs might produce a different result; however, we did not have access to this documentation for this exploratory effort.

The AS serves as a planning and program-management document. It addresses the full range of acquisition topics and generally provides a complete outline of the planned program execution, using an established template. In general, that template corresponds to the

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[1] According to DAU, an ADM is a "memorandum signed by the Milestone Decision Authority (MDA) that documents decisions made as the result of a Milestone Decision Review (MDR) or other decision or program review" (DAU, 2014a). An AS is a

> business and technical management approach designed to achieve program objectives within the resource constraints imposed. It is the framework for planning, directing, contracting for, and managing a program. It provides a master schedule for research, development, test, production, fielding, modification, post-production management, and other activities essential for program success. (DAU, 2011)

information requirements identified in DoDI 5000.02. The AS has served a similar function from 1980 to 2013 according to guidance:

> [The] Acquisition Strategy is unique for each program and should be tailored by the PM to the circumstances surrounding the program. Intended exceptions to applicable DoD Directives and Instructions should be noted in acquisition strategy summary. (Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, 1980a, pp. 9–10)

> The documents prepared in support of the decision process (e.g., Acquisition Strategy, Systems Engineering Plan [SEP], Test and Evaluation Master Plan [TEMP], Life-Cycle Sustainment Plan [LCSP], etc.) should generally not be prepared solely for staff review and approval, but be intended primarily for use within the program as planning and management tools that are highly specific to the program and tailored to meet program needs. (USD[AT&L], 2013, p. 4)

The Secretary of Defense memorandum was the previous version of what is now an ADM. We focused our search for examples of tailoring to these two documents based on the fact that policy directives state that tailoring should be documented in them.

Results of Acquisition Decision Memorandum Review

We searched through 900 available ADMs from the late 1980s through 2012 for examples of what appeared to be tailoring or streamlining. Out of this larger sample, we selected 58 ADMs that demonstrated specific evidence of tailoring or streamlining.[2] We were able to extract

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[2]   Our criteria to search for clear examples of tailoring drove the selection of these 58 out of 900. Many of the other 842 ADMs that we did not examine more carefully might, in fact, reflect tailoring; we could not review all 900 equally in this exploratory analysis. Thus, it would be incorrect to conclude that only 58 out of 900 ADMs reflected tailoring.

some main topic areas that could be considered tailoring. Examples of tailoring in the ADMs include the following:

- Initiate acquisition later in the acquisition process (e.g., MS C).
- Streamline documentation requirements.
- Grant permission to forgo a formal DAB.
- Streamline testing processes.
- Transfer the MDA to the services in order to streamline authority.
- Provide waivers.
- Add a milestone.
- Change the normal sequence of events in the acquisition process to accommodate unique circumstances of a program.

Some of the ADMs also used the word *streamlining* interchangeably with *tailoring*. One ADM instructed the program office and oversight offices to use the IPT as the forum for figuring out what and how to streamline. The ADMs also called for streamlining of documentation to meet program-management needs and the needs of processes or meetings. By *processes*, we refer to the DAB process and testing processes. Another way of streamlining mentioned in an ADM was the transfer of MDA status to the services (delegation of MDA responsibility).

There were also numerous examples of the USD(AT&L) encouraging tailoring of oversight processes and program documentation within the ADMs. In one ADM, the USD(AT&L) instructed OSD and Air Force staff to jointly tailor and streamline documentation requirements for the MS C DAB. There was also encouragement for supporting a "tailored acquisition approach." Tailoring was also requested for programs that were mature and therefore did not require an MS A or B so could enter the acquisition process at MS C. In one instance, the USD(AT&L) requested a tailoring plan and approved it in the ADM; however, this was not common. In another ADM, a tailoring plan was outlined in the ADM as attached guidance.

The most common example, and likely the most explicit use of tailoring in the ADM sample, is the use of waivers. ADMs referred to statutory requirements that require an official waiver and to waiv-

ing regulatory requirements. One common example was waiving the requirement for live-fire test and evaluation. Other ADMs discussed waiving these other requirements:

- competitive alternative sources
- competitive prototyping
- Defense Acquisition Executive Summary reporting
- MS I documentation (both statutory and regulatory)
- third successful flight test before EMD
- application of full-up, system-level survivability and lethality tests
- Command, Control, Communication, Computers, and Intelligence Support Plan (subsequently renamed ISP)
- independent cost estimate
- 10 U.S.C. 2435(b) in order to continue development efforts with funding
- U.S. Code limitation on low-rate initial-production quantities
- noncommon aircraft hardware
- 10 U.S.C. 2366b certifications (with waivers)
- full and open competition under 10 U.S.C. 2304(c)(7)
- Program Protection Plan
- Corrosion Prevention and Control Plan
- Item Unique Identification Plan.

The ADMs are only one source for tailoring and streamlining evidence. Given that these memoranda are short and cover all major decisions for acquisition programs, typically they contain only minimal information on tailoring or streamlining. In the rare circumstance in which schedule is the fundamental driver for the program, tailoring plays a greater role in the ADMs.

Results of Acquisition Strategy Review

As explained earlier in this chapter, the AS is the primary program document in which tailoring is supposed to be included. We reviewed 66 ASs covering the period November 2001 through March 2013. As

part of Better Buying Power 1.0, the most recent AS template provided to program offices was changed to include tailoring more explicitly. The new template asked for a specific explanation of what is being proposed to be tailored and why, along with a list of waivers. Prior AS guidance also indicated that a section on tailoring should be included.

Our observations on how tailoring is reflected in ASs falls into two categories: structure and content. Although all ASs tend to be somewhat specific, they also tend to have a great deal in common. They all cover largely the same technical and procedural elements of acquisition policy and process, regardless of how the ASs were organized.

Structure

Most ASs include a separate subsection that discusses tailoring. In contrast, a relatively small number of ASs integrate discussions of tailoring into the specific functional element being tailored. This suggests an important difference in how stakeholders perceive tailoring. The majority appear to consider tailoring as a separate activity in program planning, rather than an integrated aspect of planning. In the few examples we found in which tailoring was integrated into program planning, the discussion of what was being tailored and why tended to be more nuanced and reflected a deeper consideration of program and environmental characteristics affecting program management, execution, and oversight. Examples include obtaining waivers for the use of halon 1301 for fire suppression, the types of pre–MS B risk reduction accomplished and how they translate into risk mitigation during Engineering and Manufacturing Development, and the incentive plan associated with development and production contracts.

For programs whose ASs included separate tailoring sections, the placement of those sections varied widely. Sometimes the section on tailoring was at the same high level as other main topics in the AS (e.g., contracting strategy, technical management, logistics, and testing). Alternatively, the tailoring discussion might be a subset of a main section called "business management," "program management," "program structure," or "acquisition approach." Titles of these sections were either "tailoring," "streamlining and tailoring," or "streamlining and acquisition excellence." There were some patterns across services; each

service tended to have a preferred structural placement for the tailoring section. For instance, the Army tended to include tailoring at the highest level of section indentation, whereas the Navy tended to include it as a subsection of program management, and the Air Force often did not list it in the table of contents at all.

Content

The language included in tailoring subsections tended to be boilerplate: broad, ambiguous language that tailoring of *x* would be accomplished, was to be planned, or was already incorporated into the AS. Even when specific elements of acquisition technical or process procedures were called out, exactly what was tailored and why was not usually explained in any detail. We found few examples in which the AS explicitly linked one or more program characteristics to a specific technical or procedural element being tailored. In addition, programs that included tailoring language tended to identify only a few items to be tailored.

However, it was apparent that even programs for which the AS did not specifically address tailoring (i.e., did not use the word *tailoring* or *streamlining* anywhere in the document) did, in fact, reflect some degree of tailoring. Specific acquisition technical or procedural elements were usually discussed with respect to the characteristics or environment of the specific program. These were generally highly nuanced discussions that reflected that program officials had, in fact, thought through how to apply specific technical or procedural elements within the context of their programs. Thus, even when an AS did not incorporate an explicit tailoring subsection of language, some degree of tailoring was reflected in the AS. Conversely, just because an AS included specific language or a subsection on tailoring does not mean that tailoring was done more thoroughly or better.

The range of acquisition procedures that were tailored included the full breadth of items listed in Chapter One:

- phase in which program entered the acquisition process
- overall program structure
- structure and content of acquisition phase

- information and documentation requirements
- number, timing, and scope of technical and oversight reviews
- number, timing, and scope of decision milestones
- decision level or approval authority for specific documents or technical reviews
- degree of development and production concurrency
- combined developmental and operational testing
- technical or performance specifications
- contracting strategies (type and incentives)
- contractor cost and performance reporting requirements.

Most programs did not have explicit waivers except when statute or regulation specifically stated that a waiver was required. For example, programs that wanted to avoid live-fire test and evaluation require explicit waivers to that effect.

The kind of tailoring mentioned in the AS also tended to reflect the policy or philosophical emphasis in the extant policy regime. The AS tended to use language found in DoDI 5000.02 or *Defense Acquisition Guidebook* in effect at the time the AS was written.

We could not detect dominant patterns in what was tailored across commodity types or services. However, boilerplate language tended to be similar (or even the same) for ASs within a service in a given period. Such language also tended to be future tense, using "will be" as opposed to "is" tailored.

Some programs used the phrase *compliant with* in discussing how a procedural element applies to a program. This might suggest more of a checklist mentality than critical thinking as to whether a procedural requirement actually applies and adds value to program management or oversight.

Typical vague language used includes such phrases as these:

- "Only data required for program management are being submitted by the contractor."
- "Processes have been streamlined."
- "Non–value-added activities have been eliminated."
- "Requirements were stated in terms of performance standards."

Although these phrases suggest tailoring, they do not actually demonstrate that tailoring was thoroughly considered or actually occurred. One common statement was that "business processes have been tailored to contain only those requirements that are essential and cost-effective," but there is no evidence that such a cost-effectiveness analysis was actually performed.

Document or information appears to be the procedural element most often tailored. Examples include requests to waive CCDR, System Threat Assessment Report requirements, Program Protection Plan requirements, Clinger–Cohen Act (Pub. L. 104-106, 1996, Division E) requirements, or independent logistics assessment requirements.

In general, a program's AS does include some degree of tailoring. But there are few examples in which the AS provides detail on exactly what was tailored and why.

Conclusions

The goal of this research was to provide a preliminary understanding of how tailoring is used in DoD acquisition and of potential barriers and paths to improve tailoring. We assessed whether additional research would help identify ways that could make tailoring more widespread. We conclude that adequate guidance exists to encourage tailoring and that it does occur. However, tailoring is not as effective as it could be because it most often narrowly focuses on reducing documentation requirements. In part, this is because institutional obstacles exist; in part, it occurs because the acquisition workforce has not been thoroughly educated about how to take full advantage of what the regulations and guidance both permit and encourage. Additional in-depth research could identify those institutional barriers and suggest actions to mitigate their effects in order to increase the effectiveness of tailoring in DoD acquisition programs. Additionally, a broad-based guide on tailoring could help facilitate more-effective use of the existing authorities for tailoring. Such a guide might include when tailoring should be used, how it can be done, and how to ensure that it is done correctly with no unanticipated adverse consequences.

This exploratory research on tailoring in defense acquisition used a targeted approach of a literature review, interviews, and acquisition documentation to start to understand some key questions regarding tailoring. Recognizing that all programs differ, we find that tailoring is shaping governance, adapting processes, and planning requirements to meet unique conditions of acquisition programs. Tailoring can encompass streamlining bureaucracy, reducing cycle time, and reducing

touch points through modifying content, document requirements, and the review process to meet the specific needs of a program. Tailoring has always been an aspect of acquisition policy and program management and is used to adapt acquisition management and procedures to the specific characteristics of a particular program, including management structure, oversight and reporting, and AS. Current acquisition policy guidance allows for the discretion of PMs and oversight officials regarding what aspects of the process can be tailored, what elements of a program should be considered in determining tailoring needs, and what tailoring should produce. There is no policy statement or guidance on how to tailor or what specific benefits are expected; this is not necessarily a problem because programs tend to be fairly different from one another and tailoring properly should reflect those unique characteristics. However, current policy and practice do emphasize the importance of tailoring in balancing the needs of appropriate program management and oversight with the needs and requirements of the program.

Tailoring is highly encouraged in regulation and guidance, but, according to interviewees and some literature, it is not always supported throughout the approval hierarchy. This creates a challenge for the PM and program office staff, who frequently need to focus their attention in multiple directions to execute programs. Consequently, if a PM has to devote a significant portion of his or her time and attention to defending tailoring, then the potential efficiency gains from tailoring might offset by the time spent defending the tailoring. The perception that gaining approval for tailoring is difficult and time-consuming is a major disincentive to taking advantage of the flexibility inherent in acquisition policy. Tailoring is not an end unto itself but is a means to an end—a well-founded acquisition strategy appropriate for a specific program.

In the literature review that was conducted for this report, the study team found that an urgent warfighter requirement provided a strong incentive for tailoring. In addition, the presence of an acquisition workforce willing and able to compromise at all levels involved was needed to accomplish the tailoring. Certain program types have charted a path using tailoring over time: IT systems, rapid-acquisition

programs, and programs with schedule as the primary driver. PMs who are in charge of programs with these characteristics might find tailoring easier than other PMs do. In the literature, we found several examples of acquisition programs for which tailoring was called out as successful (e.g., CPOF, VXX, and MRAP); however, tailoring tends to be a secondary issue, rather than a focus, in most of the literature.

This research found through interviews that tailoring is constrained by a range of organizational behaviors and characteristics. These include such things as high turnover, limited incentives, a workforce not trained in how and when to tailor, and simple bureaucratic inertia.

While examining ADMs and ASs, the study team found that a more detailed knowledge of the program, including additional program documentation, would provide a better picture of how tailoring is applied. This is mainly because the section of the ASs that is devoted solely to tailoring typically contains boilerplate language too ambiguous to be meaningful. The evidence of tailoring we found in ADMs and ASs consisted of more-obvious examples of tailoring (e.g., waivers and eliminating events or documentation). Most ASs include separate subsections that discuss tailoring. In contrast, a relatively small number of ASs integrate discussions of tailoring into the specific functional element being tailored. This suggests an important difference in how stakeholders perceive tailoring. The majority appear to consider tailoring as a separate activity in program planning, rather than an integrated aspect of planning. In the few examples we found in which tailoring was integrated into program planning, the discussion of what was being tailored and why tended to be more nuanced and reflected a deeper consideration of program and environmental characteristics affecting program management, execution, and oversight.

The language included in tailoring subsections tended to be boilerplate: broad, ambiguous language that tailoring of x would be accomplished, was to be planned, or was already incorporated into the AS. Even when specific elements of acquisition technical or process procedures were called out, exactly what was tailored and why was not usually explained in any detail. We found few examples in which the AS explicitly linked one or more program characteristics to a specific

technical or procedural element being tailored. In addition, programs that included tailoring language tended to identify only a few items to be tailored.

However, it was apparent that even programs in which the AS did not specifically address tailoring (i.e., did not use the word *tailoring* or *streamlining* anywhere in the document) did, in fact, reflect some degree of tailoring. Specific acquisition technical or procedural elements were usually discussed with respect to the characteristics or environment of the program. These were generally highly nuanced discussions that reflected that program officials had, in fact, thought through how to apply specific technical or procedural elements within the context of their programs. Thus, even when an AS did not incorporate an explicit tailoring subsection of language, some degree of tailoring was reflected in the AS. Conversely, the fact that an AS includes specific language or a subsection on tailoring does not mean that tailoring was done more thoroughly or better. In this analysis, it was not possible to assess the quality and effectiveness of tailoring, only that some degree of tailoring was done in one way or another.

The kind of tailoring mentioned in the AS also tended to reflect the policy or philosophical emphasis in the extant policy regime. Thus, many of the programs that started in the mid- to late 1990s or early 2000s tended to mention use of performance-based standards rather than military specifications. The ASs tended to use language found in DoDI 5000.02 or *Defense Acquisition Guidebook* in effect at the time the ASs were written. In general, a program's AS does include some degree of tailoring. But there are few examples in which the AS provides detail on exactly what was tailored and why.

We identified a preliminary set of conditions for tailoring to be successful or effective. One of the more critical is sustained leadership support, including bridging changes in leadership. Tailoring also requires significant effort and initiative by officials in the program office, functional staff, and MDA to accomplish. Tailoring might be easier in an environment in which both staff and leadership expect tailoring for each program and the only issue is what kind of tailoring is appropriate for a given program. In some respects, this would be a major cultural change from the current environment, in which 100-percent

compliance with all elements of policy is the perceived expectation. Also, there is no reason that PMs should be the only officials responsible for developing ideas on how to better match the technical, management, and oversight process to the needs of a program. Functional and oversight staff outside the program office should also develop ideas for tailoring in a specific program. The IPT structure (i.e., Working-Level IPT, Integrating IPT, and OIPT) that programs use to manage planning and execution seems like an appropriate forum to discuss tailoring ideas and make recommendations to program, service, and OSD leadership. In the interviews, we heard multiple times that OIPT leads are considering tailoring. Conditions need to exist such that all stakeholders can document what is being tailored and the rationale for that tailoring as a baseline (beyond boilerplate language). This would allow revisiting the appropriateness of the tailoring decisions if changes to fundamental planning assumptions or the external environment warrant it. Also, the critical point for tailoring to be planned in a program's life cycle is before MS B, where planning is conducted; however, there might not be sufficient funding available to set up a program office and do the proper planning before MS B. Finally, for tailoring plans to be evaluated before the major decisions, those plans should be provided six to 12 months before a major decision.

Next Steps

This research-support effort presented some overall themes in the literature and acquisition documentation on tailoring. It was supplemented by interviews to develop a baseline understanding of the topic. This work will inform future work on tailoring that might include the following:

- detailed case studies on acquisition programs that have successfully used tailoring
- an explicit framework that links specific programmatic characteristics with a range of possible tailoring options

- best practices on how to tailor and how to get the right level of tailoring
- document the degrees of freedom afforded by the acquisition policies and regulations as a way to identify the universe of potential tailoring alternatives
- a methodology for measuring the results of tailoring.

Any of these efforts would require a balanced review of tailoring at both the oversight level and the execution level in the services, which should be collected in part by interviews at the service level.

Detailed Case Studies on Tailoring

There is minimal literature on how acquisition programs have used tailoring to improve program outcomes. Some isolated examples appear consistently in the literature. This area would benefit from a more indepth look at a large collection of acquisition documentation (beyond ADMs and ASs and what was covered in this exploratory analysis) on multiple acquisition programs to extract lessons learned or methods that were taken for tailoring. We could also track a newer program, such as Small Diameter Bomb II, which was approved at MS C to enter the formal acquisition process.

Linking Program Characteristics to Tailoring Options

The underlying premise of tailoring is that a program with certain technical, programmatic, and environmental characteristics would be better served by an acquisition process that appropriately acknowledges and reflects those characteristics. One approach to making tailoring easier is to develop guidance that links a particular program characteristic or set of characteristics to the minimum set of statutory and regulatory requirements that provide for sufficient management and oversight. This kind of guidance would give PMs and other stakeholders a set of ideas and place to start as they develop a program's AS.

Measuring Tailoring

Also absent from the literature is a methodology for measuring tailoring. As a result, a future study could align the documents, reports,

reviews, technical events, and milestones called out in the ASs with those required in DoDI 5000.02. In a study that measures tailoring, it would also be important to capture any statistics on the type of tailoring used and under what circumstances (i.e., are certain types of tailoring more common?).

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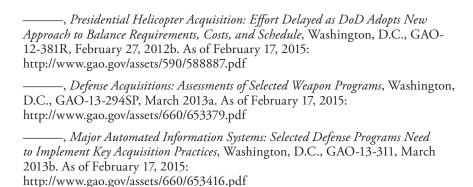USCODE-2011-title10-subtitleA-partIV-chap137-sec2304

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Regulations and guidance have permitted tailoring of the acquisition process as one of many ways in which the acquisition workforce can more efficiently achieve program objectives. Tailoring is frequently mentioned in regulations and guidance. Policy allows, and even encourages, program managers to customize regulation-based reviews, processes, and information requirements to accommodate the unique characteristics of a program while still meeting the regulations' intent for appropriate decision criteria and oversight processes. The extent to which programs take advantage of opportunities to tailor processes and documentation is not clear, but anecdotal evidence suggests that tailoring is more difficult in practice than guidance suggests. Widespread use of tailoring appears to be constrained by a variety of factors inherent in defense acquisition. The exploratory research reported here reviewed the literature and conducted interviews within the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the RAND Corporation to determine whether this policy area would benefit from additional in-depth research.

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